DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 211 211 PS 012 586

AUTHOR Glen, Sally; McCoy, Youlonda
TITLE Providing In-Service Training to Paraprofessionals Working with Handicapped Children - "It's Not in My Job Description".
INSTITUTION Learning and Education for Exceptional Paraprofessionals, Greensboro, N.C.
PUB DATE Nov 81
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (Detroit, MI, November 5-8, 1981). Filmed from best copy available. Not available in paper copy.

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Competency Based Education; *Disabilities; *Educational Needs; Elementary Education; Guidelines; *Inservice Education; Learning Modules; *Paraprofessional Personnel; Postsecondary Education; Preschool Education; Program Descriptions; Special Education; Student Characteristics; *Teacher Aides; Teacher Characteristics

ABSTRACT

The competency-based training program of the Learning and Education for Exceptional Paraprofessionals (LEEP) project is described and the contents of five LEEP developed training modules are indicated. In addition, the term "paraprofessional" is defined, characteristics and duties of paraprofessionals are specified in terms of competencies, and orientation and support needs of paraprofessionals are pointed out. In conclusion, guidelines for training adult learners and for conducting training sessions are provided and characteristics of adult educators and adult learners are listed. (Author/RH)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

ED211211

# PROVIDING IN-SERVICE TRAINING TO PARAPROFESSIONALS WORKING WITH HANDICAPPED CHILDREN - "It's Not in My Job Description"

A paper presented at the NAEYC
Annual Conference

Detroit, Michigan
November, 1981

BY

SALLY GLEN, DIRECTOR

&

YOULONDA MCCOY, TRAINING COORDINATOR

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Sally Glen
Youlonda McCoy
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

LEARNING AND EDUCATION FOR EXCEPTIONAL PARAPROFESSIONALS (LEEP)
301 South Elm Street
Suite 414
Greensboro, North Carolina 27401

PS 012586

FILMED FROM
BEST COPY AVAILABLE

IN-SERVICE TRAINING FOR PARAPROFESSIONALS

1981 NAEYC Conference Presentation

## DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

The Learning and Education for Exceptional Paraprofessionals (LEEP) project is developing a competency-based training model for special education paraprofessionals in collaboration with state, regional, and local agencies in North Carolina. The project is affiliated with North Carolina A&T State University in Greensboro and is funded by the Office of Special Education, Department of Education. Global activities of the project include the following:

*training special education paraprofessionals;

*identifying potential trainers and assisting them in implementing training for paraprofessionals;

*developing appropriate training materials;

*and facilitating the continued liaison among local education agencies, regional centers, community colleges, and the State Department of Public Instruction.

Paraprofessionals trained in this program work under the direct supervision of a professional in a vareity of treatment and educational settings. They work in special preschool settings for the mentally, physically, and/or emotionally handicapped; in regular preschool programs, both public and private, which integrate handicapped children with normal children; in public school settings, and in residential centers and various community agencies. These paraprofessionals assist in implementing individualized and small group programs of instruction, assessing students, and performing other non-instructional duties.

The training program, based upon the acquisition of identifiable competencies, assumes that adults learn through active participation, by trying out new ways of working and by having opportunities to evaluate their own progress and to perceive their own strengths and weaknesses.

Based on this philosophy, LEEP has developed training modules which emphasize the attainment of competency-based skills for the paraprofessional. Module I, Focused Attention, is a guide for developing observation skills. The second module, Utilizing Child Development Concepts in Understanding the Special Needs Child, familiarizes the paraprofessionals with normal growth and development and specific deviations in that development. Module III, Orientation to Handicapping Conditions, is an overview of the handicapping conditions, with definitions, characteristics, causes, and specific teaching strategies listed for each area. Speech and Language Stimulation acquaints the paraprofessional with specific speech development and daily classroom techniques. Module V, Behavior Management, assist the paraprofessional in becoming more aware of her/his role in students' behaviors. It focuses on self-awareness and the effect of the adult's verbal and nonverbal behaviors in interacting with students.

Each module is segmented into competency units so that all or part of the module can be used based upon the needs of the paraprofessionals and the time constraints of the agency. Pre and post tests are also used to determine the effectiveness of the training. The participants are given an opportunity to evaluate both the training format and materials used as well as the relevancy in meeting their needs. Their comments/suggestions are incorporated into the revision of the modules and their specific training needs are relayed to the supervisor to be considered in planning future training. As a result of these needs, other modules are currently being developed taht focus on socilization skills, the role of the paraprofessional, and specific tips for supervisory personnel to consider in hiring the paraprofessional.

The actual training is conducted at a vareity of sites with varying times schedules. The training site and amount of training time is based upon the constraints of individual agencies.

Thus, training periods range from limited periods each week, to monthly training days.

North Carolina has 58 community colleges and technical schools. In addition, along with the SEA and LEA's, the state is divided into 8 regional education centers. There is also a strong Head Start and day care mechanism in place. In order to ensure that training is available for paraprofessionals after the duration of this project, LEEP is identifying and training a cadre of trainers from the agencies currently in place across the state. The emphasis of this training is on increasing skills in delivering training to special education paraprofessionals. The cadre of trainers will utilize LEEP modules and will be given support and on-going assistance by LEEP staff in facilitating training in their local settings. The trainers will also assist in critiquing and revising the training materials to ensure their applicability to the wide range of paraprofessional in the state.

The project will also disseminate a paraprofessional newsletter with information and activities of interest to the paraprofessional and professional alike. Paraprofessional input will be encouraged and will hopefully establish a link between the paraprofessional throughout the state.

## DEFINITION OF PARAPROFESSIONAL

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142) has had a great impact on the use of paraprofessionals in the classroom. It mandates the creation of a comprehensive system of personnel development in each state to insure that in service training is available to all personnel involved in the education of handicapped students. While the concept of teacher aides in the classroom is not new, difficulty exists in defining the roles and responsiblities for the paraprofessionals uniformly from school to school.

For the purpose of this discussion, a paraprofessional is an individual who work directly under the supervision of certified personnel and performs duties that are of a routine non-instructional, or semi-instructional nature (Kansas State Education Agnecy). The paraprofessional supports the teacher in all aspects of the classroom.

Paraprofessional are referred to by numerous titles (Lombardo, 1980). These include:

*auxiliary personnel

*classroom aides

*clerical aides

*education aides

*instructional aides

*teacher aides

*volunteers

But regardless of the title used, the paraprofessional supports the teacher in all classroom and school activities.

## CHARACTERISTICS AND DUTIES OF THE PARAPROFESSIONAL

The Kansas State Educational Agency (1977) suggests that paraprofessionals should be skilled in the following competencies:

*understand the characteristics of the student's with whom they will be working

*skills related to working with children

*interpersonal relations (communication with teachers, parents, staff)

*disciplinary skills

*skills in specific handicapping conditions

*subject matter skills

*organizational skills

*skills in operation of office and audiovisual equipment.

North Carolina paraprofessionals rank behavior management, handicapping conditions, and interpersonal communication as the most important skill areas for training.

In a survey of administrators, teachers, support personnel, and paraprofessionals (Kansas State Education Agency, 1977), adaptability and dependability were rated as the two most important personal characteristics needed to become a successful paraprofessional. Tolerance, versatility, cooperation, and resourcefulness were also valuable characteristics. Good grooming has a minor role.

Paraprofessionals participate in multifarious tasks. These include:

*field trips

*reinforce learning in small groups

*supervise free play

*prepare instructional materials

*work with small groups

*provide special help

*assist in activities initiated by the teacher

*assist in supplementary work

Paraprofessionals should not be solely responsible for the classroom, for diagnosing children, or for preparing lesson plans. They should not be used as substitues for the certified teachers. Most importantly paraprofessionals should not be assigned to work with the most difficult children for most of the day.

What Paraprofessionals NEED to Know

It has been suggested that both teachers and aides be given orientation to skills and expectations of the teacher aide program prior to launching the program (Clough & Clough, 1978a). Such an orientation may or may not be possible due to varying organizational constraints. However, there are some basic questions which should be raised by the aide in the event that the information was not supplied during the interview or orientation. Welty and Welty (1976) have identified some very practical questions questions which the aide should have answered:

* What is your chain of command?
* What procuedures are set up for checking in and out?
* What are the lunchroom policies?
* What are the playground rules?
* What first aid measures will you be expected to take?
* Who in the school is the audiovisual expert?
* What housekeeping duties are not in your domain?
* How are supplies acquired for the classroom?
* How are library materials and other instructional media acquired?
* What procedure would you follow if you are late? Absent?
* What is the daily schedule--bells, class schedule, recess, bus, lunch?
* What is the fire-drill procedure?
* What forms are required for you to use, and how should they be used? (pp. 14).

In additional to seeking necessary information, Clough and Clough (1978b) offer suggestions to help aides function effectively in their roles:

* Learn the names of pupils in your room as soon as possible
*Learn as much as you can about each pupil as quickly as possible
*Lend personal assistance to pupils whenever possible

* Give encouragement to pupils wherever possible and whenever you can
* Praise each pupils' efforts and success
* Be patient in dealing with pupils
* Consult often with teacher as to how you can assist
* Learn the routine of the school day
* Become familiar with the school building, playground, etc.
* Become acquainted immediately with emergency procedures (pp.21).

Once agency and role expectations have been made clear to the aide, the initial steps will have been taken toward alleviating much of the obscurity commonly associated with teacher aides.

## TRAINING ADULTS LEARNERS

When training paraprofessionals it is important that they be recognized as adult learners with learning needs which distinctly separate them from child learners. One such need characterized by Knowles (1978) as separating the adult and child learner is the adults need for learning which has "practical application in meeting immediate needs rather than learning for more abstract purposes . . . ." This requires the consideration of the aides past and present work experiences, assessed needs (as determined by an assessment of their background), and the skills they bring to the job (Austin, 1978). This also requires an identification and understanding of agency objectives in conjunction with the aides needs and goals. A training model developed by Lynton and Pareek (1967) sequences the training process into three phases:

1. the pretraining phase-initial expectation and readiness, training specifications, and selection of participatants;
2. the training phase-exposure to materials, reinforcements, retrial, internalization of knowledge;
3. the post-training phase-performance on the job, continuing education additional on the job training.

CONDUCTING TRAINING

Establishing a comfortable learning climate is extremely important during the first few minutes of the training. Davis (1979) identified the following major steps which set the learning climate:

1. Greeting participants
2. Getting everyone comfortable
3. Spelling out ground rules
4. Warming up
5. Discussing expectations (pp. 224-226).

Mainstreaming positive learning environment does not end with setting the learning climate. Instead, the trainer will want to encourage learning and sharing by mainstaining an environment conducive of this. One way of doing so is by reviewing trainer goals, values and expectations in conjunction with the trainees. Is the trainer trainee relationship on of "dominant teacher" and "dependent learner" or one of interdependence and self-direction?

In his book, Planning, Conducting and Evaluating Workshops, Larry Davis has identified characteristics of the adult educator and characteristics of the adult learner. The characteristics are worthy of consideration by persons committed to planning and implementing effective training experiences for paraprofessional. They are:

Characteristics of the Adult Educators:

Listens carefully and accurately

Recalls events, interactions and conversations accurately

Is supportive of participant efforts

Encourages participants to try new behaviors

Does not impose his own values or opinions

Respects feelings and is free to express his own

Is patient

Is responsive and undefensive when criticized

Can demonstrate genuine anger when appropriate

Serves as chief recorder

Directs activities with quiet authority

Directs activites with stern commands when that will move the learning past frustration

Is trusting

Is interested in the content

Provides useful and timely feedback on performance

Is non-judgemental

Stimulates interest and suggests new possibilities

Is capable of true dialogue

Reinforces learning

Models desirable attitudes and behaviors

Counsels with individual trainees

Is capable of showing a wide range of genuine human emotion

Is flexible, open to change

Is consistent in work and deed

Is diplomatic (pp. 20-26).

Characteristics of Adult Learners:

> Adults are people who have a good deal of first hand experience . . . Effective workshops tap participants experience as a major resource for learning
>
> Adults are people who have large bodies subject to the strett of gravitational stimuli . . . Effective workshops have chairs or a good man coffee breaks

Adults are people who set habits and strong tastes . . . Effective workshops are sensitive to adult habits and tastes and accommodate as many as possible

Adults are people who have some amount of pride . . . Effective workshops develop greater abilities in self-direction and responsibility

Adults are people with very tangible things to lose . . . Effective workshops are concerned with gain, not with providence inadequacy

Adults are people who have developed a reflex toward authority . . . Effective workshops make appropriate use of authority

Adults are people who have decisions to make and problems to solve . . . Effective workshops tend to be both problem-centered and entertaining

Adults are people who have a great many preoccupations outside a particular learning situation . . . Effective workshops achieve a balance between tight presentation and the time needed for learning integration

Adults are people who are bewildered by their opinions . . . Effective workshops assist them in selection

Adults are people who have developed group behaviors consistent with their needs. . . Effective workshops concern themselves with the needs of their participants

Adults are people who have established emotional frameworks consisting of values, attitudes, and tendencies. . . Effective workshops assist adults in making behavior changes

Adults are people who have developed selective stimuli filters. . . Effective workshops exert some control over stimuli. Effective workshops focus on more than one sensing system

Adults are people who respond to reinforcements. . . Effective workshops are built on appropriate reinforcement

Adults are people who need a vacation. All good adult educators know this and. . .Effective workshops accommodate it

Adults are people who are supposed to appear in control and who therefore display restricted emotional responses. . . Effective workshops do not add to the bars, neither do they pry open the doors. Effective workshops are prepared for emotional release if it occurs

Adults are people who are secretly afraid of falling behind and being replaced. . . Effective workshops allow them to keep pace and grow with confidence

> Adults are people who can skip certain basics . . . Effective workshops are not bound to basics. Effective workshops get on with helping adults learn to cope with present problems
>
> Adults are people who can change. This is the prime tenent of faith for effective workshops
>
> Adults are people who have a past. . . Effective workshops are concerned with developing new competencies; the "why's" of the past are someone else's concern
>
> Adults are people who have ideas to contribute. . . Effective books are those that leave room for them, (pp. 226-238)

Paraprofessional training is a key ingredient to blending the skills of teachers and aides to a winning team for students. If training is to impact the teacher and aide team, then the training must take all factors into consideration in order to ensure effectiveness.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Austin, Michael J. Professionals and Paraprofessionals. New York: Human Sciences Press, 1978, pp. 98.

Clough, Dick B., and Clough, Bonnie M. Utilizing Teacher Aides in the Classroom. Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1978a. pp. 9, 21.

Clough, Dick B., and Clough, Bonnie M. A Handbook of Effective Techniques for Teacher Aides. Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1978b, pp. 24, 37, 96.

Davis, Larry Nolen. Planning, Conducting and Evaluating Workshops. Austin, Texas: Learning Concepts, Inc., 1970, pp 20-26; 236-238.

Kansas State Educational Agnecy. Facilitators Model, Guidelines for the Training, Utilization, and Supervision of Paraprofessionals and Aides. Topeka, Kansas: Author, 1977.

Knowles, Malcom S. The Modern Practice of Adult Education. New York: Association Press, 1970, pp. 37-55

Lombardo, Victor. Paraprofessionals in Special Education. Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1980. pp. 4.

Lynton, Rolf P. and Pareek, Udai. Training For Development. Homewood, Illinois: Dorsey Press, 1967, pp. 19.

Welty, Don A. & Welty, Dorothy R. The Teacher Aide in the Instructional Team. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1976, pp. 14.